

Book Reviews

Better Perinatal Health. A Survey From The Lancet. 103 pp. Illust. The Lancet, London, 1980. \$7, paperbound

Perinatal health has been a focus of attention for the last decade and is likely to become more important as costs of health care and care of the disabled increase. Judged on the basis of its perinatal mortality rate Sweden has been regarded as a model for success. Changes in perinatal outcome in France have been watched with considerable interest since that country introduced sweeping changes in the early 1970s in the hope that the financial burden of caring for the disabled might be reduced. In North America improvements in technology and regionalization of perinatal care have been the principal instruments of programs that have produced improvements in outcome.

A series of articles on these and other facets of perinatology, which were printed in *The Lancet* in 1979, have recently been published in this small monograph.

The book starts well by comparing the perinatal mortality rates of different nations during the mid-70s and discussing the principal factors that are recognized as being associated with perinatal mortality. There follows a very useful chapter that addresses the validity of perinatal mortality as an index of perinatal care, stressing the unreliability of data in some circumstances, describes problems in interpretation, such as that due to the tendency for reproduction rates to increase as compensation for high rates of perinatal loss, and discusses the influence of cross-sectional analysis.

The book fails when it attempts to address fetal asphyxia, prematurity, maternal-fetal diseases and congenital abnormalities. Of these four superficial and at times frustrating chapters, only the last has some useful data — on Down's syndrome and on neural tube defects.

The balance of the text presents an unusual opportunity for readers to compare methods of perinatal care in several countries, including Sweden, France, Nigeria, the United States, Australia and China. Most of these chapters were written by well qualified individuals, and as a consequence they make good reading for those interested in the epidemiologic aspects of perinatal health care. For such readers the book can be well recommended, although it will disappoint those seeking well validated clinical information. As well, because each article is written by a different person, uniformity of style is lacking.

However, the book takes only a few hours to read and should be regarded as mandatory reading, despite its limitations, for health care professionals — especially those who believe that the changes that will bring improved perinatal health care are simple.

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Gradwohl's Clinical Laboratory Methods and Diagnosis. Volumes 1 and 2. 8th ed. Edited by Alex C. Sonnenwirth and Leonard Jarett. 2540 pp. Illust. The C.V. Mosby Company, St. Louis, 1980. \$145.25 (Can.). ISBN 0-8016-4741-X

These reference textbooks, the work

of 65 specialists in the various techniques of the clinical laboratory, were very well edited by Alex Sonnenwirth and Leonard Jarett. The content of the two volumes is divided into 11 major sections on general considerations, clinical chemistry (11 chapters), hematology (9 chapters), hemostasis and thrombosis (6 chapters), immunohematology and tissue typing (14 chapters), immunology (8 chapters), bacteriology (22 chapters), viral and rickettsial diagnostic procedures (6 chapters), medical parasitology (5 chapters), medical mycology (4 chapters) and the serology of infectious diseases (4 chapters).

The editors have attempted, and quite successfully, to present information on almost every aspect, except the histologic and cytologic, of laboratory activities. The subdivision of material sometimes seems arbitrary and unsystematic, owing probably to some overlapping of the expertise and interests of the authors. For example, porphyrins are discussed both in the chapter on liver function and in that on the laboratory investigation of hemoglobin.

The section on general considerations contains chapters on laboratory safety, instrumentation, statistics, computers, radionuclides, solutions and buffers. They provide good basic reading for anyone just starting to work in a laboratory.

Because of the number of authors involved, the style of presentation differs and a few chapters are disappointing. However, most are clearly written, with an impressive and current compilation of the methods and sequence of tests done

in both routine and special laboratories. Unfortunately, some authors have not discussed the principles behind the test methods or described the advantages and problems inherent in their use, probably in an effort to control the length of the completed volumes. I was also disappointed to find that in many chapters the clinical applications of these tests have been dealt with rather superficially. However, this type of book cannot be expected to provide the detailed information found in works devoted entirely to a single topic, and we have to be content with the extensive bibliography given at the end of each chapter.

This two-volume set will serve best as a source of preliminary reading for someone whose primary involvement is in another field. For example, it will provide the medical biochemist with basic information about new developments in hematology and microbiology, and the anatomic pathologist with information about toxicology. It will also be useful for clinicians who are interested in the technical details of tests they order, and may serve as a source of methods for those working in a general laboratory.

Because this set covers a comprehensive range of topics and contains a 201-page index that has been compiled with thoroughness and care, it will be a good reference source. The price of \$145, however, will limit its use as a textbook.

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Management of Endocrine Disorders. Jerome M. Hershman. 259 pp. Illust. Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, 1980. \$16.24 (Can.), paperback. ISBN 0-8121-0715-2

This book discusses the major endocrine disorders, with an emphasis on treatment. Each chapter contains selected case studies to illustrate points of diagnosis and management and a short bibliography.

Each disorder is presented by one or, occasionally, two members

of the staff of the school of medicine at either the University of California in Los Angeles or the University of Southern California in Berkeley. Despite the potential for unevenness in quality or tone of this type of approach, which has become the norm because of the degree of "superspecialization" that now exists within the subspecialties, this volume reads surprisingly smoothly. Perhaps to the credit of the editor, Dr. Jerome Hershman, the chapters follow a more or less uniform format that minimizes discrepancies.

Each chapter is supplemented with tables and figures that often contain generally helpful flow sheets for recommended approaches to management. Occasionally these figures have imprecise explanatory legends. For example, in figure 2-1 the hatched area, which presumably represents the normal range of responses of thyroid stimulating hormone to thyrotropin releasing hormone, is not clearly identified. The case studies offered in the individual sections are often of interest but occasionally seem to illustrate rather esoteric situations — the case of hyperprolactinemia described in the section on pituitary disease was associated with the formation of a keloid at the site of a sternotomy incision.

Although some individual biases do enter into the discussions of the specific agents used for diagnosis and treatment, expressions of opinion should be tolerated in this book inasmuch as the authors are recognized authorities in their field. On the other hand, some omissions are evident, such as the lack of a discussion of the treatment of hyperosmolar nonketotic diabetic coma in the chapter on diabetes mellitus. However, this chapter does contain a substantial section devoted to exercise therapy for diabetes, an important contribution on a topic that is not generally covered as extensively, or even at all, in most general textbooks of medicine. Similarly, the fairly extensive section on the management of iatrogenic adrenal insufficiency in the chapter on adrenal disease is a welcome addition. It is this inclusion of important therapeutic areas not

often discussed in sufficient detail elsewhere that enhances the value of this volume.

One of the difficulties in writing any textbook of medicine or its subspecialties is the problem of providing current information; advances in diagnosis and therapy continue to occur between the time of writing and the time of publication. In general this volume copes quite well with this problem. With certain disorders, however, advances have been made subsequent to the writing of the book. For example, the use of computer-assisted tomography for the diagnosis of neoplasms of the pituitary has progressed beyond the level suggested in this textbook. Overall, however, the recommendations remain current.

One general comment concerns the title, "Management of Endocrine Disorders", considered in terms of the contents. Although Hershman notes in a preface that a companion volume on endocrine pathophysiology is available, a substantial proportion of this volume is given to presentations on the etiology and methods of diagnosis of the endocrinopathies described, including discussions of pathophysiology that are sometimes quite lengthy. This may be an inevitable consequence of having to put treatment regimens in the proper context. None the less, it does result in a textbook that provides not only discussions of management, as the title promises, but also outlines of the differential diagnosis and pathogenesis of the endocrinopathies discussed.

Is this volume a worthwhile purchase? If so, for whom? Hershman indicates that the volume was written for residents and practitioners in general internal medicine and in family practice. As a practical guide to clinical endocrinology I agree that it would be of benefit to those in both fields, in that it provides information that is more extensive than might be obtained in a general textbook of medicine and yet more succinct than that offered in most textbooks of endocrinology. Furthermore, as a compact accompaniment to more detailed textbooks of endocrinology, this volume may